

Floor Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Safe Climate Caucus
December 3, 2013

Mr. Speaker,

On February 15, a small group of Democratic members of the House joined together to form the Safe Climate Caucus. We vowed to come to the House floor every day to talk about the defining environmental challenge of our time: climate change.

Today marks the 100th day we have spoken on the House floor.

The Safe Climate Caucus is composed of representatives from across the country. We come from the West Coast, the East Coast, the North, the South, and the Midwest; we come from coastal regions, urban areas, and rural communities. We represent a cross-section of America.

We started the Safe Climate Caucus because of the enormous disconnect that exists between what scientists are telling us about the dangers of climate change and the conspiracy of silence and denial that exists in the House.

There is a mountain of evidence that climate change is real and a dangerous threat to the future of our children and grandchildren. Yet this body refuses to accept scientific reality.

I wish my Republican colleagues would open their eyes and escape their congressional bubble. Firefighters across the West know that wildfires are getting bigger and more dangerous. Farmers in the Midwest know that droughts and floods are becoming more common and more intense. Coastal communities know that rising sea levels and extreme storms threaten their very existence.

And just last month, a super typhoon – perhaps the strongest ever recorded – demolished entire cities in the Philippines.

Extreme weather, sea-level rise, heat waves, droughts, flooding, wildfires, pests. That is what climate change looks like.

So what is this House doing? Denying . . . obstructing . . . and weakening the Clean Air Act.

In June, the International Energy Agency warned that if we don't act now, avoiding catastrophic climate change will cost trillions of dollars.

In October, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that the evidence that the earth is warming is “unequivocal.” This is the same level of confidence that scientists have that smoking causes cancer. Last month, the World Meteorological Association reported that the levels of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere set new records, reaching concentrations higher than any in the last 800,000 years.

Yet this House ignores it all. We challenged the Republicans on the Energy and Commerce to come to the floor to debate us and defend their record of inaction. They never showed up. The Committee won't even hold a hearing to listen to the scientists.

Democrats are in the minority, so we can't call hearings. But we won't be muzzled. Since February, the members of the Safe Climate Caucus reported on the alarms that the scientists are sounding. In fact, today marks the 100th legislative day that members from the Safe Climate Caucus have spoken out. Except during the Republican government shutdown, our members have come to the floor every day we have been in session.

It has not always been easy to keep this streak of speeches alive, but we have because of the commitment of our 31 members to taking action before it is too late.

We are speaking out because we have a duty to our neighbors, to our children, and to our grandchildren. We know when future generations look back at these times, they won't remember the debates we've had on the deficit. They won't remember the debates we've had on boosting oil drilling. What they will want to know is whether we acted to protect the world from catastrophic climate change while we still had time.

And they will want to know whether we made the investments we need to make the United States the world leader in the clean energy technologies of the future.

We are at a critical juncture. I urge all members to join with the Safe Climate Caucus in ensuring we make the right choices for our future and for our economy.